FRENCH PROTESTANT COMMITTEE

102, Boulevard Arago, PARIS

A Call to the Protestants

of NEUTRAL COUNTRIES

and an Address from Switzerland

to the PROTESTANTS of FRANCE

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To the protestants of neutral countries.

In the name of the principles of Sixteenth Century Reform of which we both are the sons, we wish to defend before you the cause of France and her Allies in this war where the very future of humanity is at stake.

Endowed with the right to free-thinking by that Reform of our Fathers, Protestants cannot remain neutral in the drama of this time. It matters not whether it be the neutrality of arms or the neutrality of conscience, — the one is self-contradictory and the other self-condemned.

Our beliefs order us at all times to seek and serve the Truth. " The Truth is mighty and will prevail ". Though the powers of deceit may triumph for the moment, Truth alone will gain the final and decisive victory.

Is it not the greatest of human duties to seek religiously for the Truth in the most terrible war that has ever flooded the world with blood?

Economic sympathies, ancient interests, racial and religious affinities cannot and ought not to affect the great principles of right and justice. Important as religious, political and commercial relations are, they exist only because of their dependence on the greater principles which alone assure the life and future of mankind.

We ask that you who believe Germany and Austria-Hungary to be fighting only for their defense against jealous enemies revise your judgment. And as for those who still hesitate not daring to commit themselves, we await with confidence their serious examination of the proofs of the justice of our cause.

Though our hearts are saddened by the spectacle of this most barbarous war; by the accounts of atrocities in which so many innocents are victims, by the thought of our provinces pillaged and ravaged, and by the memory of those who have died for ther country; yet our consciences are clear and our souls strong in the Lord.

Our souls are strong because nothing will upset the courage of France and our consciences clear because we affirm and will prove, not with words but with facts, that France neither wished, declared nor was prepared for this impious war, for which the whole responsibility ought to fall on Austria and more especially on Germany, who for forty years has concentrated all her forces, waiting the hour when she might launch them against the world.

Free Citizens of those States, considered great or small according to the number of their people, in reality all great by reason of the greatness of their mission, ought you not to realize what the true results of a victory for Germany will be, so that realizing them you may spurn even the thought of such a victory. Can you be ignorant of her ambition for the extension of her empire in Europe, and her desire to subject the world by her victorious arms to her political and economic domination?

Is there a nation in the world which can forget that its destiny depends on the decision of this war? Should Germany and its Allies be victorious in this war, nations will cry in vain for the respect due their neutrality and their treaties, — for who will raise himself to defend them?

Remember martyred Belgium! Remember the German Chancellor declaring, while the German people applauded his perjury, that the invasion of Belgium " was contrary to the law of nations » but that « necessity knows no law. "

And remember the day when Alsace-Lorraine, in spite of the will of her citizens, — free then as you are to-day, — was

annexed to Germany. She raised herself with France to maintain her protest against this barbarous right of conquest. In this war of giants which she wages with her Allies for the independence of peoples, does not France appear to you as the Soldier of the Right? We struggle to assure the victory of that Justice which, according to Holy Scripture, alone " raises the nations. " Will you not put yourselves at our side to defend this most holy cause ?

Your Protestantism, a pure hommage to the Truth, will it not cause you to rise against the authors of the crime of this war, and will not the great voice of the conscience of your people make itself heard?

With the noble arms which the Thruth will give us, help us fight for the liberty of the peoples and the sacred right of nations.

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To the protestants of France.

An Address from Switzerland.

We consider that it is our fraternal duty to respond to the call which you address to your co-religionists of neutral countries. You have aroused our sympathy and our sense of justice. We say to you that this sympathy is yours and that we want to do justice to the cause of which you have made yourselves the advocates. To defend it you have called up the Principles of Sixteenth Century Reform. In the name of those Principles we send you this evidence of our affectionate brotherhood. We assure you that we eagerly undertake our part in your present struggle and suffering.

The crisis of actuality has put an end to alliances of opportunism and superficiality. On the other hand it has shown clearly how profound are the common roots which unite the several bodies of Christians conscientiously devoted to the service of God and of Jesus-Christ, because, obedient to the principles of the Great Reform, they are opposed to all mechanical conception of their religion.

The Reformation is not an heritage for our supine contentment; it is, according to Vinet's thought, an active principle, as permanent in the Church as Christianity itself, which has been entrusted to us that we may seek always to make it real and to preserve it from all stain. We ought to guard jealously the ideal of a God of Justice and Love, whose realm is to be revealed to all humanity. This world conflict, alas, has shown but too clearly how far we are from the realization of this ideal, how much it has been deformed and vilified by those making of Violence and National Egotism a God who serves but to justify and glorify War and all its horrors. A new Paganism, more authoritative and stronger than that of ancient times, because it hides itself in a cloak of Christianity, tramples conscience and personality under foot and bows down before its idol of Might.

These deformities serve only to render more clear and more imperative the duty of returning to the true and living God. We would have no such horror of the religion of Militarism, did not the God of the New Testament speak to our hearts and conscience with a solemn call to all mankind. We are seeking to understand this call in Switzerland as you are in France, and we are resolved to respond to it. Let us return together to our God whose Kingdom is all nations of the world. In the name of Christian conscience we denounce all those whom a mad national pride so blinds that they think themselves alone called to realize the Kingdom of God. Let us gain from the Gospels an idea of that truly democratic justice which can alone end the abuse of Might and give to International Law its full meaning and power.

And here we say to you how much our sympathies are with you and with the general trend of protestant reform. In the social tenets of Christianity and in the historical realizations of democracy based on the Calvinistic spirit, we seek a guarantee of the future and a hope for humanity, which though degraded by its scorn of the Right, shall at last raise itself and proudly take up its course to a new ideal of justice. One feels still in reformed protestantism that living reassuring spirit which gave the Huguenots, your ancestors, their indomitable energy and their will to fight without pity against all that opposed the realization of Divine Will and the Kingdom of Christ. We know what they have done to liberate the conscience of men and we have great hopes for the future effects of the spirit which animated them.

The disregard of the rights and integrity of small nations has filled us with consternation, and in particular, as citizens of Switzerland, we protest vehemently against the violation of the neutrality of Belgium. There is no need to defend the cause of France among us nor to tell us that she neither sought nor provoked the war. We know it. People are comparatively rare in Switzerland who do not do her justice in this matter. The number is steadily increasing of those who know what they owe her and are prepared to acknowledge the debt. Do not wrong us by believing that certain isolated witnesses speak

with the voice of the real Switzerland. We believe in France and still expect much of her. We admire her spirit of progress. We love her generous and chivalric temperament which has not weakened in her struggle against tyranny and injustice. Leaving for others the belief in the fable of an irreligious France, we do homage to all of her great work in the cause of God. History brings back a picture of France fighting through the ages to deliver her personal living religion from the shackles opposing its progress. She knew how to communicate to her ardent search for her ideals, moral and divine, her passion for clarity, her enthusiasm and her faith. By her sincerity, by the intensity of her religious sentiments, your people have valiantly contributed their part in the guiding of manking on the road which leads to the God of the New Testament.

Sons of that France which through all time has striven so courageously for the great ideas of humanity, you will understand readily that our position imposes on us very special duties and obligations Already among you there are those who, though engaged in a desperate struggle upon the issue of which hangs the future of your country, think not only for the safety of France, but for the future fate of mankind. True representatives of that ideal universe, which has always left its mark on French thought, they have even had a care for the dignity of their adversaries. They seek whatever there may be of good in their enemies that they may not despair for mankind. They are happy to find there the qualities which lead them to hope for better days. You will understand without difficulty how much the more strongly we ourselves, in our little land of Switzerland, respected so far in the conflict, are anxious to prepare for the moment when we shall realize that the nations should be united for the Kingdom of God. Do not see in this attitude a sign of moral cowardice : do not see in it a humanitarian tendency deprived of its strength and life, nor a passive and banal love of peace. On the contrary we feel that the spirit of the Reform and a very live sense of our moral responsibility, imposes this duty upon us.

Because we view this war neither with regard for the immediate causes which have provoked the castrophe nor for the

agent who is directly responsible, we see in it the general bankruptcy of a materialistic civilization, based on violence and propaganda. Outside the actual conflict, we people of Switzerland also accept our part of the general responsibility. We believe that it is the duty of all men to seek to realize a new conception of humanity corresponding to the Christian ideal of the Kingdom of God. We believe that a people defends the truest cause when it struggles not only against the enemies from without, but also inside, against the deceitful powers which have dethroned God, — against Materialism, forgetfulness of duty, love of luxury and thought of self.

A nation cannot prepare for the future by stirring up race hatred and rivalry or by teaching its people that they alone are called to realize the just and the true.

We have abundant proof that this spirit exists in all peoples, but even among those who at this moment are striving to destroy your national existence, there are a chosen few, well disposed to understand us, resolutely opposed to the cult of violence and might, enemies of that brutal nationalism and ready to work for a new order of things.

We consider it a sacred duty to affirm these things and to do all that we can for a reciprocal understanding between the peoples of the nations now at war. The Christians of every nation ought to greet with pleasure and rejoice in any quality of their enemies which is worthy of esteem and honor.

Without misunderstanding the tragic reality of the present and without anticipating the time, we work to hasten the day when Christians of all countries will stretch forth the hand of fellowship one to another; and when that shall come we hope to be able to count on you, as to-day you can count on us to understand you, to sympathize with you, and to share your indignation and your suffering.

We have responded personally to your appeal because our hearts so directed us. But we believe that we can say to you that all people of Switzerland, whether Germanic or French, who have the dignity and future of their country at heart, agree with us and join with us in addressing you this witness of their

warm sympathy and fraternal love. We live with you in hope and we await the divine promise of a new land where Justice shall dwell.

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Imp. de Vaugirard, H.-L. MORTI, Directeur, 12-13, Impasse Ronsin. — Paris.